

## DINDGA MCCANNON

*Dindga!*

11 October – 12 November 2022

**Private View: Monday 10 October 2022, 6-8 pm**

**Frieze Week Champagne Brunch**

**Friday 14 October 9:30 am-12 pm**



Dindga McCannon, *Family #1*, 1988

Pippy Houldsworth Gallery is proud to present *Dindga!*, the first European solo exhibition of Dindga McCannon, whose practice as both artist and activist has centred Black subjectivity for more than five decades. McCannon's work fiercely scrutinises the inequality faced by Black women in America, drawing attention to the oft-forgotten histories and stories of public figures and everyday heroines, as well as her own family and friends.

Growing up in Harlem in the 1950s, McCannon was taught needlework by her mother and grandmother, a skill that, as she reached artistic maturity, she would radically reclaim as a feminist action in the development of her vibrant textile assemblages and found-object quilts. In the early 1960s, amidst the rising civil rights movement, she participated in several activist groups, leading her to join the pre-eminent Weusi Artist Collective, a group that supported and gave voice to African American artists, allowing them to express and exhibit their ideas freely. Together with Faith Ringgold and Kay Brown, McCannon later formed the Where We At Black Women Artists Inc. collective, which pioneered a new form of community-based arts education and built a support system for Black women creatives that harnessed the power of collectivism.

McCannon's commitment to community is at the heart of this survey exhibition, which includes work spanning the early years of her career to the present day. In a painting from 1979, she outlines her plans for *A United Community*, a six-story mural realised in Bushwick, Brooklyn in 1985 and since destroyed. The painting depicts a group of diverse residents from a local neighbourhood playing in a band together. McCannon documents her faith in the unifying power of music in several other works, including the 1990 assemblage *Rasta Band*, which shows three figures mid-performance and features photo-transfer tributes to Rastafarian icons in intricate detail. *Carnival* (2022), the first in a new series of sculptures of embellished seamstress busts, is a tribute to the history of the festival, to masquerade and music, to joy and revelry, the feathers that crown the mannequin a reference to the elaborate costumes of carnival dancers.

McCannon's excavation of the history of American oppression of Black communities commemorates early social activists, Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman, women born into slavery who fought tirelessly for the abolitionist

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cause and basic human rights for their people. In a recent painting, she depicts them as monumental figureheads, protectors of future generations. Elsewhere, a quilt made in 2015 honours Queen Mother Moore, the African-American civil rights leader who was bestowed a chieftancy by members of the Ashanti people in Ghana and which became her informal name in the US. Other works pay homage to a diverse group of Black figureheads from the fields of politics and the arts, including Nelson Mandela, Maya Angelou and, in a new painting, folk artist Harriet Powers, whose turn-of-the-century quilts have been a fertile source of inspiration for McCannon.

While McCannon frequently references well known freedom fighters in her work, she also spotlights lesser known and everyday Black stories. One such piece is *Why Did it Take So Long? (Black Women in Aviation)* (2012), a group portrait of the first all-female Black flight crew to operate a commercial aircraft in 2009. Each of these women stares directly at the viewer, while beneath them hang a number of commemorative tags honouring those who have fought to reach this point. In *I Ain't Never Coming Back to the U.S.! Ever! to Bro. Yekk* (2016) McCannon tells the story of a former partner, a teacher who was assaulted by police when returning home one evening, pinned to the ground and racially abused. Following this ordeal, he emigrated to Mexico, never to return to the United States. 25 years later, police violence against African Americans and other minority communities continues to be ever-present within America. In reframing the canon of storytelling, McCannon fearlessly promotes truth while inviting us to imagine a different future.

Dindga McCannon (b. 1947, New York, NY) lives and works in Philadelphia, PA. Current exhibitions include *Afro-Atlantic Histories*, co-organized by Museu de Arte de São Paulo (MASP) and Instituto Tomie Ohtake, São Paulo, touring to Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), LA; Dallas Museum of Art, TX. Recent exhibitions include *We Wanted A Revolution: Black Radical Women, 1965-1985*, Brooklyn Museum, NY, and travelling to California African Arts Museum, CA; Albright Knox Gallery, NY; Institute of Contemporary Art Boston, MA; and *Black Power*, National Civil Rights Museum, TN. Her work is included in prominent museum collections across the US, including Brooklyn Museum, NY; Whitney Museum of American Art, NY; Studio Museum in Harlem, NY; The Phillips Collection, DC; Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, NY; and Michigan State University, MA, amongst others. McCannon is also represented by Fridman Gallery, New York.

On the occasion of the exhibition, Pippy Houldsworth Gallery will publish a catalogue, featuring a specially commissioned interview between the artist and Zoé Whitley, Director of Chisenhale Gallery, London.